

Appl. No. 10/731,683
Amdt. dated August 10, 2009
Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 Expedited Procedure
Examining Group 3735

PATENT

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-19. (canceled)

20. (previously presented) A system for enhancing minimally invasive heart surgery, the system comprising:

at least one retractor device for enhancing access to a patient's heart through a first incision;

a heart stabilizing device having a tissue contacting surface and at least one suction aperture adjacent the surface;

a first coupling device for coupling with the heart stabilizing device through a second incision at a location on the patient apart from the first incision, the first coupling device comprising:

an elongate shaft having a proximal end, a distal end, and at least one flexible, rigidifying portion comprising a plurality of pieces and a wire that when tightened locks the pieces of the rigidifying portion into place; and

means for coupling the elongate shaft with the heart stabilizing device adjacent the distal end of the elongate shaft; and

a first flexible arm for coupling the first coupling device with at least one stable object, wherein the first flexible arm comprises a distal clamp configured to clamp the first coupling device, and a proximal clamp configured to clamp the at least one stable object.

21. (original) A system as in claim 20, further comprising:

a heart positioning device having a tissue contacting surface and at least one suction aperture; and